

## BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING MENTALLY AGILE JUNIOR LEADERS

BY

COLONEL MARLON D. BLOCKER  
United States Army

### DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:

Approved for Public Release.  
Distribution is Unlimited.

USAWC CLASS OF 2009

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.



U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>30 MAR 2009</b>		2. REPORT TYPE <b>Strategy Research Project</b>		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2009</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Barriers to Achieving Mentally Agile Junior Leaders</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>Marlon Blocker</b>			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>see attached</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>26</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 21-01-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Barriers to Achieving Mentally Agile Junior Leaders				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Marlon D. Blocker				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. Stephen J. Gerras Department of Command, Leadership, and Management (DCLM)				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <p>The Army's desire to produce agile and adaptive leaders is not a new endeavor. As early as 1999, the Army Chief of Staff recognized that the premium on tomorrow's battlefield will be the ability to quickly analyze a situation and come up with innovative solutions. The speeds at which events occur and their complexity will require leaders with agile minds who can think through a problem logically, come up with a viable course of action, and translate that concept into clear, simple language to subordinates.</p> <p>How is it possible that the Army is still seeking the agile leaders it requires after our most senior leadership identified their need over eight years ago?</p> <p>To help answer this question, this paper will describe the operational environment the agile leader must be prepared to operate within and the characteristics of an agile leader. The barriers of change, culture, and climate within the Army that impact its ability to produce agile leaders will be examined. Lastly, suggested recommendations for keeping and producing agile leaders are offered to the reader.</p>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Agility, Change, Culture, Climate					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  26	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)



USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING MENTALLY AGILE JUNIOR LEADERS**

by

Colonel Marlon D. Blocker  
United States Army

Dr. Stephen J. Gerras  
Project Adviser

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

U.S. Army War College  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013



## **ABSTRACT**

AUTHOR: Colonel Marlon D. Blocker  
TITLE: Barriers to Achieving Mentally Agile Junior Leaders  
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project  
DATE: 21 January 2009    WORD COUNT: 5409    PAGES:26  
KEY TERMS: Agility, Change, Culture, Climate  
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Army's desire to produce agile and adaptive leaders is not a new endeavor. As early as 1999, the Army Chief of Staff recognized that the premium on tomorrow's battlefield will be the ability to quickly analyze a situation and come up with innovative solutions. The speeds at which events occur and their complexity will require leaders with agile minds who can think through a problem logically, come up with a viable course of action, and translate that concept into clear, simple language to subordinates.

How is it possible that the Army is still seeking the agile leaders it requires after our most senior leadership identified their need over eight years ago?

To help answer this question, this paper will describe the operational environment the agile leader must be prepared to operate within and the characteristics of an agile leader. The barriers of change, culture, and climate within the Army that impact its ability to produce agile leaders will be examined. Lastly, suggested recommendations for keeping and producing agile leaders are offered to the reader.





## BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING MENTALLY AGILE JUNIOR LEADERS

Persistent conflict and change characterize the strategic environment. We have looked at the future and expect a future of protracted confrontation among state, non-state, and individual actors who will use violence to achieve political, religious, and other ideological ends. We will confront highly adaptive and intelligent adversaries who will exploit technology, information, and cultural differences to threaten U.S. interests. Operations in the future will be executed in complex environments and will range from peace engagement, to counterinsurgency, to major combat operations.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement from the 2008 Army Posture Statement presented to Congress by the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army describes the current and future operational environment facing our Soldiers. The adversaries our Soldiers are currently confronting in Iraq and Afghanistan are continuing to adapt to our doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures presenting new and complex challenges. The environment is characterized as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, requiring successively more and different leadership competencies and attributes from our junior leaders than have ever been asked of them before. "Leadership is paramount to everything that we do, and we have to continue to develop agile leaders and adaptive leaders, who can deal with the challenges of full-spectrum operations. Our leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be: supremely competent in their core proficiencies; broad enough to operate across the spectrum of conflict; able to operate in joint, interagency, and multinational environments."<sup>2</sup>

The Army's desire to produce agile and adaptive leaders is not a new endeavor. As early as 1999, General Dennis Reimer stated "The premium on tomorrow's battlefield will be the ability to quickly analyze a situation and come up with innovative solutions. The speeds at which events occur and their complexity will require leaders with agile minds who can think through a problem logically, come up with a viable

course of action, and translate that concept into clear, simple language to subordinates.”<sup>3</sup>

How is it possible that the Army is still seeking the agile leaders it requires after our most senior leadership identified their need over eight years ago?

To help answer this question, this paper will examine the operational environment the agile leader must be prepared to operate within, the characteristics of an agile leader, and the barriers of change, culture, and climate within the Army and their potential impacts on the Army’s ability to produce agile leaders.

### Environment

The 2008 National Defense Strategy describes the strategic environment for the foreseeable future as a global struggle against violent ideological extremists committed to overturn the international state system. The adversary is an irregular force of multi-national and multi-ethnic terrorist networks that seek to break the will of the American populace and its political establishment. These terrorist networks also seek to attack the will of the nations that have joined the United States to defeat them. They utilize Intimidation, propaganda, and indiscriminate violence designed to subjugate the Muslim world. The terrorist’s actions are directed at the coalition’s forces, their nation’s populace and the citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan. While this scenario reflects the current counter-insurgency fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, this is not the only threat potential adversaries will use to attempt to challenge the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. dominance in conventional warfare has provided a strong motivation for potential adversaries, particularly non-state and their state sponsors, to adapt asymmetric strategies to counter our conventional and technological advantages. In

addition to the irregular threat of defeating terrorist networks and insurgencies described above, other irregular threats arise from guerrilla warfare, unrestricted warfare, and narco-criminals whose scale and sophistication are increasing and are determined to challenge U.S. security interests around the globe. These irregular threats attempt to exploit niche technological advantages against the United States at a time and place of their choosing. They seek to challenge and weaken the U.S. resolve through small tactical effects, exploiting mass media and using information warfare to magnify their cause and interest.<sup>5</sup>

The United States must also prepare for the ever increasing likelihood of catastrophic, disruptive and traditional threats. That is, the employment of weapons of mass destruction or methods producing weapons of mass destruction-like effects by terrorist or rogue states which present the most likely catastrophic threat. Disruptive threats to counter, cancel, or mitigate the United States military advantages presents a growing complex challenge to our leaders who have culturally become dependent on the U.S. military's technological edge over the last two decades. Although the strategic environment is rapidly becoming more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, most state actors retain a traditional conventional force, that if overlooked could impose a significant threat to United States interest.<sup>6</sup>

Others like, General Mattis, Commander United States Joint Forces Command and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Frank Hoffman foresee an increased merging and blurring of conflict and forms of warfare. They posit that future conflicts will possess multiple forms of warfare combining conventional, irregular, disruptive, catastrophic and other forms not yet recognized. These hybrid threats are designed to target U.S.

vulnerabilities and will challenge what our leaders know and understand about warfare. Rather than confronting multiple adversaries employing different single forms of warfare, General Mattis and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Hoffman expect the United States will face competitors who will actively employ all forms of warfare, perhaps simultaneously to undermine and threaten U.S. global interest.<sup>7</sup>

As the United States slowly moves further away from our core traditional dominance of conventional warfare into the more likely realms of catastrophic, irregular, and disruptive styles of warfare, our leaders will require mental agility to master these different complex forms of warfare to the same degree of expertise possessed in the execution of conventional warfare.

#### What is an Agile Leader?

Mental agility, according to the Army's capstone leadership doctrine FM 6-22 is a flexibility of mind, a tendency to anticipate or adapt to uncertain or changing situations. Agility assists thinking through second and third order effects when current decisions or actions are not producing the desired effects. It helps break from habitual thought patterns, to improvise when faced with conceptual impasses, and quickly apply multiple perspectives to consider new approaches or solutions.<sup>8</sup>

Agility at all leadership levels within Army organizations are becoming more important to address situations that cannot be fully anticipated. In the current operational environment, the importance of direct leaders, noncommissioned officers and junior officer's ability to make the right decisions in stressful situations has taken on a new significance. Decisions and actions taken by direct-level leaders – the Sergeants

and lieutenants carrying out the missions – can easily have major strategic level and political implications.<sup>9</sup>

The Army senior leaders have recognized the need for mentally agile leaders able to successfully operate in an uncertain and ever changing environment. Yet the Army continues to struggle to develop these leaders within the Institutional Army's education system. It is not so much a matter of limited money, equipment, or facilities that is preventing the development of these leaders, but rather one that many large organizations face when trying to transform themselves. The barriers preventing the Institutional Army from producing agile leaders is its organizations inherent resistance to change, the Army's organizational climate, and its historically entrenched culture.

### Change

During his annual address at the Association of the United States Army Eisenhower Luncheon, Army Chief of Staff, General George W. Casey highlighted the need for change in the Institutional Army. He stressed that an agile force requires not only agile units, but also agile minds and institutions. "The Army's leaders and units must be supported by agile institutions that can rapidly adapt by adjusting training, manning, and equipping priorities to ensure units have the mental tools necessary to succeed. Without institutional agility, we won't succeed. And we have some work to do here."<sup>10</sup>

It can be argued that the insurgency in Iraq following the fall of the Iraqi regime and military served as a "tipping point", the moment of critical mass, which accelerated the need for significant change in the Army.<sup>11</sup> Despite the initial success of Operation

Iraqi Freedom, our forces almost immediately faced an insurgent asymmetric enemy in a dynamic environment, for which they had not fully anticipated, nor prepared for.

Although the Operational Army has now undergone the most significant organizational change since WWII, transforming into modern modular Brigade Combat Teams, the Institutional Army has been slow to change. General Casey recently stated, “We recognized that most of our institutional systems – personnel, education, training, healthcare, procurement, family support –were designed to support a pre-September 11th Army, and we recognized that institutional transformation would be essential to cementing the significant changes that we’re making across our Army.”<sup>12</sup> Recognizing the Institutional Army was slow to adapt, the current Chief of Staff of the Army in an attempt to get the Institutional Army transformed more rapidly has chartered a special task force to lead the effort to adapt our institutions to effectively implement the Army Force Generation.<sup>13</sup>

Some changes have occurred within the Institutional Army, the move to Centers of Excellence is underway, but the majority of these institutions are not expected to be fully functioning until 2011. The Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has made some positive changes. The Initial Entry Training for newly recruited Soldiers, implementation of the Basic Officer Leader Course concept, which has transformed the Initial Military Training for newly accessed officers have all occurred in the last few years. Even the Non Commissioned Officer Academy, which educates our junior and senior non commissioned officers, has changed from a single branch focus to multi-branch training. The author submits that despite advances such as these, there are

three primary reasons the Institutional Army's continues to struggle with change in their quest to develop mentally agile leaders.

First, and most importantly the challenge is one of obtaining initial "Change Agents" within the Institutional Army organization. The symbiotic and enabling relationship of senior leaders within an organization make them the first target for change. I believe they must be the first to adopt and believe in the change required and act as change agents to drive the change within the organization. Within the Institutional Army's hierarchical organizational structure, the initial change agents must be its senior leaders as the "essence of strategic leadership is the ability to understand the existing culture and to shape the organizations culture and values to support a vision of change while retaining the trust and confidence of subordinates."<sup>14</sup>

Despite the diversity of backgrounds and military experiences within the Institutional Army senior leadership as a group, they may be resistant to change themselves based on their personality composition. Surveys conducted at the USAWC and ICAF over numerous years indicate consistently that the Army's senior leadership comprises five times the number of the U.S. general population for the Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI) of Introvert, Sensing, Thinking, and Judging, (ISTJ).<sup>15</sup> The ISTJs four preferences are found overwhelmingly in the military, 58 percent Introverted, 72 percent Sensing, 90 percent Thinking, and 80 percent Judging.<sup>16</sup>

The human behavioral tendencies and preferences that provide the foundation of the MBTI assist in explaining why different types of people function differently. The MBTI helps to understand why people are interested in different things, prefer different kinds of work, approach issues in different ways, and sometimes find it hard to



understand each other – all due to basic differences in how people take in information and make decisions about it.<sup>17</sup> In other words, this indicator provides insight and a useful prediction on how ISTJs prefer to approach issues and their reaction and openness to change.

To understand this group's resistance level to change, it is helpful to understand some of the tendencies of the ISTJ. People with ISTJ preferences have a strong sense of responsibility and great loyalty to the organizations. They will go to almost any trouble to complete something they see as "necessary", but balk at doing anything that does not make sense to them. Their focus is on the task or system as a whole rather than on individuals. They tend to be logical, analytical, detached, and reasonable. ISTJs are clear and steadfast in their opinions because they have arrived at them by applying logical criteria based on their experience and knowledge. They place a tremendous value on traditions and "support change" only when facts demonstrate it will bring better results.<sup>18</sup>

The personality preferences that influence an organization's ability to implement change are those that indicate how one prefers to gather data specifically how one sees the situation, and how one orients behavior.<sup>19</sup> Generally people with the preference areas of S (Sensor) and J (Judger), present the greatest challenge to an organization in need of change. The "Sensor" and "Judger" preferences are overwhelmingly characterize the military, 72 percent being Sensing and 80 percent Judging.<sup>20</sup> The "Sensor" group tends to gather data as facts and prefers what is known to that which is unknown, the "just the facts" approach. In approaching change a common feeling amongst this group would be "if it isn't broke don't fix it", and they do not understand

why some people are always seeking changes to improve everything.<sup>21</sup> The “Judger” group displays a highly organized structure in behavior and in thinking. When approaching change, this group does not like surprises and can become unraveled if things do not go exactly as planned.<sup>22</sup>

The character of the SJ combination is generally structured and somewhat unimaginative with an extremely guarded approach to innovation and change. With the majority of the Army leadership possessing the SJ preference, it is not surprising the Institutional Army, not directly exposed to the current operational environment in Iraq and Afghanistan, has a significant challenge in making institutional changes. In other words, the Institutional Army as an organization is buffered from the environment in Iraq and Afghanistan that is driving change in the operational Army. Therefore, the primary targets for Institutional Army change agents are the ISTJ personality types that have grown to succeed within the Army and have inculcated the Army culture, one that is reluctant to change.

Second, the Institutional Army must reexamine its adherence to outdated teaching practices, mainly due to inadequate Programs of Instruction (POI), lack of expertise in POI development, and sub-standard or non-existent cadre training and certification. POIs in theory should exist for every organizational event conducted with the students, serving as a lesson plan for the cadre to execute instruction and achieve the desired learning objectives. In reality, the POI serves more as a resource management tool to determine course costs and minimum equipment, facilities and personnel required to execute training. It has been my experience as a Training Battalion Commander that POI development is an afterthought, rarely used properly or

updated, and does not adequately serve the cadre responsible to conduct learning and training.

The primary method of instruction is outdated, antiquated, and unable to produce agile leaders. Too much instruction for our junior leaders and Soldiers still occurs within the confines of massive institutional classrooms with one instructor briefing a large group of students with a Power Point slide presentation. Instruction and learning is limited by the strict adherence to instructional artifacts. These artifacts – Field Manuals, Training Manuals, Technical Manuals, Mission Training Plans, Standard Operating Procedures, Army Regulations, Cook Books, Checklists, Command and Unit Policies coupled with undocumented bureaucratic constraints tell the instructors and students exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. When instruction is moved out of the classroom, cadre plan, conduct, and resource the majority of training events and students merely execute, leaving little opportunity for original thought, ingenuity or reflection.

Third, the Institutional Army is severely short of qualified personnel. Operations around the globe and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan are consuming the majority of higher quality of the Army's available manpower. The Institutional Army has been a personnel "bill payer" to the Operational Army for over a decade and has effectively mortgaged the Institutional Army's ability to produce the very agile leaders our leadership is asking it to produce. In an attempt to give the illusion of adequately manned units the Army has continued to reduce authorizations within the Institutional Army units and staffs sending those Soldiers to fill the expanding higher priority Operational Army requirements.

Having served at the U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) on two separate assignments it was apparently clear to me that the Army is willing to accept risk within the institutional force. The Institutional Army is not only manned at a dangerously low level, but also due to assignment policies, is manned with a lower quality of non-commissioned officers and company grade officers. The current assignment policies are working against the Institutional Army on two fronts. First, the expanding operational requirements force the quality Soldiers out of Institutional Army to fill other higher priority assignments leaving those who do not have the required skills for these assignments to remain. Second, operational units are essentially allowed to retain the Soldiers they want and offer those who are not performing to standard to HRC for assignment, which normally means an assignment into the Institutional Army to replace the losses of the quality Soldiers who have been reassigned to fill higher priority operational requirements.

During my last assignment at HRC it was common practice to waive many of the requirements for Soldiers heading into the Institutional Army, including those of Drill Sergeants and Recruiters in an attempt to keep up minimum strength levels. The current Army Manning Guidance has even removed strength floors for all Institutional Army units with the exception of Initial Entry Training Drill Sergeants and Army Recruiters allowing HRC to fill the Institutional Army with the remaining available population.

Change within the Institutional Army as recognized by the Army's senior leader is occurring too slowly to produce the agile leaders the operational Army needs now. However, changing the Institutional Army is only one of the challenges the Army faces

to produce mentally agile leaders. The Army's historically entrenched culture itself severs as another barrier.

### Culture

"The Army learns very slowly, because you have to change the culture; the culture changes slowly because innovators are forced out. If we're going to do one thing to make the organization healthy, we have to promote people who aren't like us."<sup>23</sup> The Army's culture is defined by institutional, stated, and operating values, beliefs and assumptions of its members. Culture influences norms of thought and behavior and establishes a basic understanding of what the Army stands for and how it functions."<sup>24</sup> The Army is steeped in 233 years of tradition and culture; it is one of the things that make the Army...the Army. But culture in an organization as historic as the Army can be an impediment to adapting itself. People who have bought into a culture see the current way of doing things as "correct" and "right". This can facilitate smooth and effective functioning of the organization if the current way is, in fact, the right way. However culture can be an obstacle to change when the way things are done now cease to be effective for the future.<sup>25</sup> These cultural values are taught to new members deliberately or by influence, as the correct way to think and act.<sup>26</sup> Culture influences how individuals talk to each other, approach problems, anticipate and judge situations, develop expectations, determine right from wrong, establish priorities, and react to many other aspects of organizational and interpersonal behavior.<sup>27</sup> Therefore success in an organization such as the Army is directly dependent on an individual's acceptance and adherence to the organization's norms, values and beliefs. As an individual achieves higher rank with greater responsibility and span of control, their accepted cultural

norms, values and beliefs influence those they control. In other words, leadership influences and dictates the behavior of subordinates and subordinates behavior reinforces cultural norms through their dictated and acceptable behavior. Those individuals that resist the culture and display divergent norms, values, and beliefs are forced out of the organization, further reinforcing the organizations cultural behaviors. Thus, it is not surprising that the Army is slow to adopt innovative, adaptive, and agile thinkers within its ranks after decades of management that valued leaders that think, act, and behave as they do.

The Army's own organizational culture contributes to the challenge of producing and developing innovative mentally agile leaders who are able break from habitual thought patterns and consider second and third order effects. The old Army phrase "when I want your opinion, I'll give it to you", effectively summarizes the Army's long standing approach to independent thinking from its junior leaders whose success in the organization promotes being "like minded" with those superiors who directly control their fate and success. As a result the Army's senior leaders who determine which officers are selected for promotion, advanced schooling, and command assignments tend to select officers in their own image, self-perpetuating and existentially reinforce the current Army culture of "like minded" men and women.

The Army's inherent resistance to change and long held cultural norms that inhibit its ability to produce agile leaders is reinforced by the climate found within most Army organizations.

## Climate

Culture and climate reinforce each other. Culture influences the characteristics of the climate by its effect on the behavior and the thought processes of the leader. The leader's behavior creates a climate that influences everyone in the organization.<sup>28</sup> At the organizational level, the evidence is clear that positive command climate "acts as a magnet" that attracts and holds on to spirited employees who are motivated and committed. At the individual level, the key to the climate is leadership in general and senior leadership in particular.<sup>29</sup> The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Report (ATLDP) findings suggest that Army practices are out of balance with beliefs, compromising unit readiness and leader growth. Junior officers are not receiving adequate leader development or opportunities to learn. There is also a considerable gap in communication between the senior officers "Baby Boomers" and the younger Soldiers "Y Generation" resulting in a dramatic increase in Captains and first term Soldiers leaving the Army.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore clear to surmise that those senior leaders in the Army, having long been shaped by the Army's culture and climate of senior leaders that preceded them have a predictable style of influencing their unit's climate. The climate established by these leaders is compromising leader development and growth and is forcing the Army to take unprecedented steps to halt the exodus of junior leaders. For every quality Soldier the Army loses due to its current climate challenges, the Army is finding it more difficult to replace that Soldier with one of equal quality.

In the Army more than any other service, success is centered on its manpower. As the Army's series of new doctrinal manuals state, agile leaders are needed to effectively operate as part of the full-spectrum force. This full-spectrum of operations will

challenge our junior leaders like never before and require Soldiers and leaders of exceptional quality.

In a recent article, strategy for the long haul, an Army at the crossroads, Andrew Krepinevich states, “here the need for Soldiers of exceptional quality risks bumping up against the limits of what the Army can reasonably expect to recruit under current conditions”.<sup>31</sup> Despite the Army’s efforts to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of Soldiers of a high quality, the trends are not encouraging. Consequently, rather than sustaining (not to mention increasing) the quantity of its force of those Soldiers who possess the mental attributes required of an agile leader, the Army finds the quality of its junior Soldiers and officers declining.<sup>32</sup>

To help fill its recruitment needs for both officers and enlisted Soldiers who choose to leave the Army in part because of its current climate, the Army is forced to recruit and promote personnel of a lower quality just to sustain required strength levels.

In 2007, the Army fell well short of its goal in recruiting high school graduates, recruiting only 79 percent holding a high school diploma. In 1992 the high school graduation rate for recruits had been as high as 98 percent and was 86 percent as recently as 2004 showing an alarming trend for the future. The percentage of recruits requiring a moral waiver to join the Army has more than doubled since 2004. The percentage reached 11 percent in 2007, rising from 4.6 percent only three years earlier.<sup>33</sup>

The decline in quality is not isolated to newly recruited Soldiers, but is now impacting the Army’s Non-Commissioned Officers and junior officers as well. In 2005 the Army began automatically promoting enlisted personnel in the rank of Specialist to



Sergeant, based solely on the Soldiers' time in service, without requiring them to appear before a promotion board. In April 2008 the policy was extended to include promotions from Sergeant to Staff Sergeant. The Army was short over 1,500 sergeants when the policy went into effect. Since then, the shortage has been reduced by over 70 percent, but numbers do not reveal quality — or lack thereof.<sup>34</sup>

The Army's current climate is also having a direct impact on its ability to retain quality officers. In 2003, roughly 8 percent of the Army's officers serving in their fourth through ninth year of service left the Army. Only three years later, that attrition rate had jumped to 13 percent. Of the nearly 1,000 cadets from the West Point class of 2002, 58 percent are no longer on active duty.<sup>35</sup> An effort in the Fall of 2007 to entice over 14,000 Captains to extend their commissions fell short by roughly 1,300.<sup>36</sup> Compounding to the problem, the Army states it will need approximately another 6,000 Captains as it plans to grow the Army by another 65,000 Soldiers.<sup>37</sup> The Director of Officer Personnel Management for the Army's Human Resources Command informed the Army's leadership that the Army is facing an immediate and long-term shortage in junior officer manning. There is a projected shortfall of roughly 3,000 Captains and Majors until at least 2013, with the Army counting only about half the senior Captains that it needs.<sup>38</sup>

Another impact on the quality of the junior officers is the increasing percentage of new officers coming from the US Army Officer Candidate School. The traditional sources; West Point and Reserve Officer Training Corps programs are unable to provide the Army with the number of new junior officers to replace those that choose to leave the Army. The Army has been increasingly compelled to pull Soldiers, most of who have not graduated college, from the junior enlisted ranks and send them to Officer

Candidate School. The number of Officer Candidate School graduates has grown dramatically since the late 1990s, rising from roughly 400 a year to over 1,500 a year; more than the graduating class at West Point.<sup>39</sup>

As the Initial Entry Soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officer quality is declining, promotion rates are increasing to meet manning requirements. Instead of the traditional promotion rates of 70 to 80 percent of eligible officers to Major, today over 98 percent of eligible Captains are promoted to Major.<sup>40</sup> These trends are worrisome, especially for an Army that is placing unprecedented demands on its Soldiers and calling for its institutions to produce agile leaders in the face of declining quality to operate successfully in the domain of full-spectrum operations.

The overall decline in quality and the report from the Army Training and Leader Development Panel Report, which suggests that Army practices are out of balance with its beliefs, should be alarming to the Army's senior leadership. The compromise of leader growth resulting in a dramatic increase of junior officers and first term Soldiers choosing to leaving the Army further reinforces the need for change. The command climate within a unit, primarily shaped by its leader, more than another factor influences a Soldiers decision to either stay or leave the Army.

As with culture, the climate within the Army is contributing to the challenge of producing mentally agile leaders. The current climate is influencing the choice of an unprecedented number of officers and first-term Soldiers to depart the Army, leaving the Army short of quality trained junior leaders. To fill this gap, the Army has compromised quality for quantity in a time when the environment is growing more complex and more challenges and demands are being placed on the mental attributes of the Army's junior

leaders. This lack in quality is primarily being felt in the Institutional Army's cadre and instructors charged with producing the Army's mentally agile leaders. Current Army assignment policies pull the highest quality cadre and instructors out of the institutional Army to fill the higher priority Operational Army requirements, leaving a lower quality cadre and instructor within the institutional Army. This decline in quality cadre and instructors within the Institutional Army is impacting its ability to produce the mentally agile leaders the Army requires.

### Recommendations

The following are recommended changes that I believe when implemented will assist the Army in producing and keeping mentally agile leaders. First and probably most importantly is to stop the exodus of the junior leaders that are returning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Leonard Wong noted in his monograph, junior leaders that have experienced the crucible of war are now a cohort of adaptive and agile leaders that the Army needs to leverage or risk losing if ground down by the bureaucratic forces within the Army.<sup>41</sup> It appears the thus far the bureaucratic forces have the initiative. The Army must do more to hold unit commanders responsible for their command climate and retain junior leaders, especially the junior officers. I recommend that the Army senior leadership hold all commanders, from division through company level accountable for retaining quality junior leaders. The Army should institute a program to retain junior officers similar to the reenlistment mission the commanders receive now for enlisted Soldiers. This is not to say that commanders are not currently actively engaging these junior leaders as they approach the end of their service obligation. However it has been my experience that commanders wait until too late to

begin discussion with junior leaders to have a significant impact on their career discussions. Each commander should be held responsible and accountable to counsel and retain a high percentage of these officers who possess the very attributes the Army seeks, can ill afford to lose and struggles to replace.

The Army must also do more to change the cultural stigma by changing its assignment and manning policies currently hamstringing the Institutional Army. An assignment to the Institutional Army is referred to as the “Kiss of Death” for most junior and mid-level officers and non-commissioned officers, viewed as a career ending assignment. The Army must do as other services and armies have done; send their very best to the Institutional Army to be cadre, instructions and doctrine writers and reward them for doing so. The Army senior leaders must break the cultural stigma associated with assignments to the Institutional Army by communicating and directing promotion, assignment and command preference to those quality officers and non-commissioned officers who serve in the institutional Army. Only by changing this stigma will the best want to serving within the Institutional Army.

Getting the highest quality mid-level officers and non-commissioned officers into the Institutional Army would be a significant step to producing mentally agile leaders, but their very presence is not enough. The Army must aggressively commit to enabling the cadre, Instructors and POI developers by providing the very best instructional methods available by academic professionals that have the knowledge, skills and techniques to develop and produce mentally agile leaders. The current method of unit produced POIs, written by the same untrained and uncertified cadre that execute the training is not working for the Army.

## Conclusion

While the Operational Army has undergone its most significant changes since World War II the Institutional Army has been slow to adapt. Even though the Army's senior leadership identified the need for agile leaders as early as 1999, the Institutional Army is still struggling to produce them. The Army leaders must possess the mental agility to react quickly and appropriately to changing situations in an environment characterized as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous while faced with an adversary that is ever-evolving. This paper highlighted some potential barriers preventing the Institutional Army from achieving the goal of producing the agile leaders and provided some recommended changes for the reader to consider. Until the Army is able to mitigate or eliminate these barriers and truly commit itself through action the Institutional Army will continue to struggle in producing and keeping the agile leaders the Army requires.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Pete Geren and George W. Casey, Jr., *A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Qualities: A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army, Fiscal Year 2007*, Feb 26, 2008, linked from *The United States Army Home Page* at "2008 Army Posture Statement " <http://www.army.mil/aps/08/index.html> (accessed October 9,2008).

<sup>2</sup> General George W. Casey, Jr. AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon Speech , Oct 10, 2008, linked from *The United States Army Home Page* at "Chief Speaks at Eisenhower Luncheon" <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/10/10/13213-chief-of-staff-speaks-at-eisenhower-luncheon>(accessed October 10,2008).

<sup>3</sup> GEN Dennis J. Reimer "AFTER WORD: LEADERSHIP", James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge, Leonard Wong eds, *Out-of-the-box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations* (Stamford, CT, JAI Press 1999) 292.

<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Gates, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, June 2008), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>7</sup> LTG Mattis and LTC(R) Hoffman, *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Theater Strategy and Campaigning Selected Readings, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008), 4-23.

<sup>8</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 6-22 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, October 2008), 6-1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 10-1

<sup>10</sup> General George W. Casey, Jr. AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon Speech , Oct 10, 2008, linked from *The United States Army Home Page* at “Chief Speaks at Eisenhower Luncheon” <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/10/10/13213-chief-of-staff-speaks-at-eisenhower-luncheon>(accessed October 10,2008).

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, quoted in W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Epidemics, Integration, and Future Needs* (Sage Publications, 2002), Strategic Leadership Selected Readings, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008), 54.

<sup>12</sup> General George W. Casey, Jr. AUSA Eisenhower Luncheon Speech , Oct 10, 2008, linked from *The United States Army Home Page* at “Chief Speaks at Eisenhower Luncheon” <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/10/10/13213-chief-of-staff-speaks-at-eisenhower-luncheon>(accessed October 10,2008).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> COL Stephen A. Shambach ed, *Strategic Leadership Primer* 2nd Edition (Carlisle, PA, US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership and Management, 2004), 33.

<sup>15</sup> M.L. McGee, T.O. Jacobs, R.N. Killcullan, and H.F. Barber, “Developing Leaders for the New Army” in James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge, Leonard Wong eds, *Out-of-the-box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations* (Stamford, CT, JAI Press 1999) 227-237.

<sup>16</sup> Otto Krueger and Janet M. Thuesen, *Type Talk at Work: How the personality types determine your success on the job* (New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1992), 303 – 304.

<sup>17</sup> CPP, Inc., interpreted by COL Thomas J. Williams, PhD Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Interpretive Report/ISTJ, (1 May 2008) 3.

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from Otto Kruegers briefing to US Army War College, 18 August 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Krueger and Thuesen, 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Krueger and Janet M. Thuesen, *Type Talk at Work: How the personality types determine your success on the job* (New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1992), 303 – 304.

<sup>21</sup> Krueger and Thuesen, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Krueger and Thuesen, 23.

<sup>23</sup> John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, CT, Praeger 2002) 222.

<sup>24</sup> COL Stephen A. Shambach ed, *Strategic Leadership Primer 2nd Edition* (Carlisle, PA, US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership and Management, 2004), 36.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Steven M. Jones, *Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate*, Strategic Leadership Selected Readings, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008), 282.

<sup>30</sup> *The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to the Army*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May 25, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Strategy for the long haul, an Army at the crossroads, linked from the US Army Combined Arms Center Battle Command Knowledge Center, <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id+709709&lang=en-US> (accessed December 13, 2008), 31.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 33

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Tilghman, "The Army's Other Crisis," Washington Monthly, <http://www2.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0712.tilghman.html>, (accessed December 13, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Tom Vanden Brook, "Deployments Strain Army Recruiting, Retention," *USA Today*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Bryan Bender, "Military Scrambles to Retain Troops," *Boston Globe*, March 7, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Tilghman, "The Army's Other Crisis," Washington Monthly, <http://www2.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0712.tilghman.html>, (accessed December 13, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Strategy for the long haul, an Army at the crossroads, linked from the US Army Combined Arms Center Battle Command Knowledge Center, <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id+709709&lang=en-US> (accessed December 13, 2008), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Leonard Wong, "Developing Adaptive Leaders: the Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom", *Strategic Studies Institute* (2004).